

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 IO-11 SAJ-01 /086 W

----- 026988

R 160730Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4823

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 1251

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ASEAN, UR, SN

SUBJECT: SOVIET OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON ASEAN AND RECENT  
DRV PUBLIC ATTACK AGAINST ASEAN

1. SUMMARY: SOVIET COUNSELLOR OF EMBASSY SEMENENKO  
DISCUSSED WITH DCM AT SOME LENGTH ASEAN DEVELOPMENTS AND  
DRV ATTITUDE TOWARD ASEAN. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT KNOW HOW  
MOSCOW WOULD RESPOND TO POSSIBILITY OF AN ECONOMIC DIALOGUE  
BETWEEN ASEAN AND THE COMECON COUNTRIES (SPECIFICALLY  
REFERRED TO IN A JOINT PRESS RELEASE ISSUED AT CONCLUSION  
OF THE SECOND MEETING OF ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS IN  
KUALA LUMPUR), HE SAW NO REASON WHY COMECON COUNTRIES  
WOULD NOT RESPOND FAVORABLY SHOULD ASEAN GOVERNMENTS  
TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO SEEK A DIALOGUE. HE INDICATED  
USSR TENDED TO VIEW ASEAN FAVORABLY PROVIDED ITS PURPOSES  
WERE STRICTLY ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AND THAT IT DID NOT  
MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF BECOMING A POLITICAL OR SECURITY  
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ORGANIZATION. HE WAS SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVE ABOUT HANOI'S

RECENT PUBLIC ATTACK AGAINST ASEAN AND CITED A NUMBER OF HISTORICAL FACTORS WHICH "EXPLAINED" HANOI'S ATTITUDE. ALTHOUGH HE INITIALLY ADMITTED THAT THE DRV'S PUBLIC COMMENT ON ASEAN REPRESENTED A FORM OF CONFRONTATION, HE LATER WITHDREW THIS EXPRESSION AND SAID IT ONLY CONSTITUTED A WARNING THAT ASEAN GOVERNMENTS SHOULD NOT COLLABORATE ON POLITICAL AND SECURITY MATTERS. WHEN DCM ASKED WHETHER USSR PLANNED TO DISCUSS WITH DRV ITS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT APPROACH TOWARD ASEAN, SEMENENKO PROFESSED NOT TO KNOW WHETHER ASEAN WAS A SUBJECT OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN HANOI AND MOSCOW, BUT SAID THE U.S. COULD BE ASSURED THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD PURSUE THOSE POLICIES AND ACTIONS WHICH WOULD BE MOST LIKELY TO PROMOTE THE PEACE AND STABILITY OF THE REGION. END SUMMARY.

2. DCM ON MARCH 15 RETURNED CALL OF RECENTLY ARRIVED SOVIET COUNSELLOR OF EMBASSY, STANISLAV NIKOLAEVICH SEMENENKO. (SEMENENKO HAS HAD PREVIOUS TOURS IN THE UK AND NEW ZEALAND AND STATES THAT HIS MOST RECENT ASSIGNMENT WAS IN MOSCOW AS A SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER KUZNETSOV. HE SPEAKS ENGLISH FLUENTLY AND SEEMED QUITE WILLING TO TALK FAIRLY CAUTIOUSLY ABOUT SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS ASEAN.) IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ON HIS IMPRESSIONS OF THE ASEAN SUMMIT AND THE SUBSEQUENT ASEAN ECONOMIC MINISTERS MEETING IN KUALA LUMPUR, SEMENENKO SAID THAT THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS APPEARED TO HAVE MADE LIMITED PROGRESS, BUT IT WAS TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS WOULD MAKE ANY SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION. WHEN ASKED WHETHER COMECON WOULD BE WILLING TO PURSUE AN ECONOMIC DIALOGUE WITH ASEAN AS SUGGESTED IN THE JOINT PRESS RELEASE, SEMENENKO REPLIED THAT OF COURSE HE COULD NOT SAY, BUT HE COULD SEE NO REASON WHY COMECON SHOULD NOT DO SO PROVIDED THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS TOOK THE INITIATIVE OF SEEKING SUCH A DIALOGUE.

3. DCM NOTED THAT THE FOUR MAJOR POWERS (U.S. USSR, PRC AND JAPAN) HAD ALL EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR ASEAN WITH VARYING DEGREES OF ENTHUSIASM, AND THAT ASEAN GOVERNMENTS HAD INDICATED THEY WERE PREPARED TO LIVE PEACEFULLY  
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WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS. IT THEREFORE SEEMED A PITY THAT HANOI SHOULD CHOOSE TO DENOUNCE ASEAN IN SUCH STRONG TERMS, IGNORE THE PROFFERED OLIVE BRANCH AND ACTUALLY CALL ON SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENTS IN THE REGION TO ACT AGAINST LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENTS. THIS HOSTILE POSITION APPEARED TO BE POLES APART FROM THE USSR'S MORE FAVORABLE ATTITUDE. SEMENENKO REACTED SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVELY, POINTING OUT THAT HE HADN'T SEEN THE FULL TEXT OF THE STATEMENTS AND ARTICLES

FROM HANOI AND THAT THERE WAS A TENDENCY IN THE SINGAPORE PRESS TO DISTORT REPORTS FROM HANOI. HE WAS RELUCTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THERE WAS ANY BASIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DRV AND USSR WITH RESPECT TO ASEAN, POINTED OUT THAT VIETNAMESE HAD ATTENDED THE 25TH COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS IN MOSCOW AND THAT THIS CONGRESS HAD NOT UTTERED A WORD OF CRITICISM OF ASEAN. HE FELT THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT NORTH VIETNAM HAD JUST CONCLUDED A LONG AND COSTLY WAR, AND THAT HANOI WAS UNDERSTANDABLY BITTER THAT ALL OF THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS HAD TENDED TO SIDE WITH THE THIEU REGIME AND THE UNITED STATES. IN FACT, LEE KUAN YEW HAD OPENLY SUPPORTED THE UNITED STATES THROUGHOUT THE WAR. THEREFORE, HANOI WAS BOUND TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF ASEAN GOVERNMENTS' INTENTIONS AND WOULD BE SLOW TO CHANGE ITS ATTITUDE.

4. TAKING THE OFFENSIVE SEMENENKO WENT ON TO SAY THAT SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENTS IN THE REGION WERE LARGELY CAUSED BY INTERNAL FACTORS, BUT THERE WAS ALSO SOME EVIDENCE THAT THEY RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM PEKING. POSSIBLY THE U.S. COULD TALK WITH THE PRC ABOUT DROPPING ITS SUPPORT FOR THESE MOVEMENTS. DCM RECOGNIZED THAT SOME OF THESE MOVEMENTS DID HAVE CONNECTIONS WITH PEKING, BUT POINTED OUT THAT THE PRC HAD EXPRESSED PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ASEAN, WHICH WOULD SERVE IN PART TO UNDERCUT THESE MOVEMENTS. UNFORTUNATELY, DRV HAD CONNECTIONS WITH SOME SUBVERSIVE GROUPS IN THAILAND AND WAS OPENLY DENOUNCING ASEAN.

5. SEMENENKO ADMITTED INITIALLY THAT HANOI'S PUBLIC COMMENTS SEEMED TO REPRESENT SOME KIND OF "CONFRONTATION" AGAINST ASEAN, BUT LATER HE WITHDREW THIS DESCRIPTION AND SAID THEY SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A "WARNING" TO THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS NOT TO MOVE TOWARDS A MILITARY OR CONFIDENTIAL

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SECURITY PACT. DCM NOTED THAT SEMENENKO HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT ASEAN MIGHT MOVE TOWARDS SOME KIND OF SECURITY COLLABORATION, AND POINTED OUT THAT HANOI PROPAGANDA MIGHT ONLY SERVE TO DRIVE THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS IN THE VERY DIRECTION TOWARDS WHICH THE USSR HOPE THEY WOULD NOT MOVE. HE ASKED WHETHER THE USSR PLANNED TO DISCUSS WITH HANOI ITS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT ATTITUDE TOWARD ASEAN. SEMENENKO REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THERE WAS ANY CURRENT OR CONTEMPLATED DIALOGUE BETWEEN HIS GOVERNMENT AND THE DRV ON THE SUBJECT OF ASEAN, BUT THE U.S. COULD BE ASSURED THAT THE USSR WOULD PURSUE THOSE POLICIES AND ACTIONS WHICH WOULD BEST PROMOTE THE PEACE AND STABILITY OF THE REGION.  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
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